

VZCZCXYZ0005
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #2031/01 3641911
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 301911Z DEC 05
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0901
INFO RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0955
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6455
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 6993
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3071
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8753
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0275
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 8662
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0753
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3669
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3393
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1315
RUCNDTA/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1803
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 012031

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2015
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: PEACE COMMISSIONER RECAPS YEAR-END STATUS WITH
ELN, FARC, AND AUC

REF: A. BOGOTA 11926

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On December 28, the Ambassador reviewed all peace processes with Colombian Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo. Regarding the ELN, Restrepo told the Ambassador that he had successfully resisted ELN pressure -- abetted by the French and especially the Norwegian facilitators -- to move the talks from Cuba to Europe. With regard to the FARC, Restrepo said Raul Reyes was not interested in the international commission's proposal to get the humanitarian accord discussion underway, was unhappy that the GOC had united the French and the Swiss into a commission so that he can no longer play one against the other, and was also unhappy that the commission was not pushing for the GOC to cede territory to the FARC in a new "despeje." He said that Reyes had tried to engineer a private meeting with the Swiss representative in order to "punish" the French for their cooperation with the government. Regarding the paramilitaries, Restrepo said there was no clear timetable for demobilization of all remaining groups, but he was optimistic that the majority would demobilize before February ¶15. Restrepo expressed frustration over GOC failure to name a senior official to manage implementation of reinsertion and the Justice and Peace law, and agreed that bringing the ELN to accept the Justice and Peace law would be difficult. End Summary.

GOC-ELN TALKS TO REMAIN IN THE REGION

¶2. (C) Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo said GOC

December 17-22 talks with the Army of National Liberation (ELN) in Cuba were positive. In Restrepo's view, the ELN had one primary goal for this round: to get agreement to move the discussions to Europe, with appropriate guarantees against arrest, a step they could play as a weakening of the European designation of the ELN as a terror organization. Restrepo expressed the belief that the ELN did not want to continue talks in Cuba because of Castro's "control" over them, and because the Cuban venue would not afford them the "legitimacy" they sought from the talks. The Norwegian, and to a lesser degree the Swiss facilitator, were prepared to concede the transfer immediately. Restrepo described a very difficult session with the Swiss and especially with the Norwegian; he said the Spaniard was a secondary but helpful player. But, in the end, GOC refusal to consent to the transfer absent substantive concessions from the ELN carried the day.

13. (C) Restrepo expressed frustration with the lack of substantive points raised by ELN leader Antonio Garcia and the ELN side; in his view their comments were general and vague. Restrepo found Garcia to be out of touch with Colombian reality and with his own organization. But Garcia was able to control his "explosive" personality and remained cordial throughout the talks. It seemed to Restrepo that Garcia has become more pragmatic through time and his ideas, as well as those of the other ELN interlocutors, seemed less fundamentalist than in the past. In Restrepo's view, the ELN wants to escape the "terrorist trademark" but is not willing to accept the conditions of the Justice and Peace law, which will be a problem in the future, both in the talks with the ELN themselves, and in their side-effects on the paramilitary peace process. Restrepo said he sees only the alternatives

of forcing the ELN to accept the Justice and Peace law or amending it. He speculated that the GOC might be able to negotiate with the ELN about prison conditions and locations -- for example, in the case of Garcia, there might be an agreement for him to serve his time in Venezuela.

14. (C) Restrepo described the current ELN membership as the "diverted sons of the Catholic Church." They are "justice fundamentalists" who, compared to the FARC or AUC, care less about money and more about ideology. For example, the ELN ideology asserts that the suffering of kidnap victims is a response to GOC "injustice" and, amazingly, makes the victims "better persons." Restrepo confessed that if it were not for the many lives that could be saved with an agreement with the ELN, he would not waste his time in talks with the group. (The Ambassador noted that a peace process with the ELN would also serve to isolate the FARC as the lone hold-out from peace talks and would allow the government to concentrate its forces against them, as well give added legitimacy to the peace process with the rightist paramilitaries.)

IS THE FARC CORNERED?

15. (C) Restrepo said that Raul Reyes, international coordinator and principal spokesperson of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), has argued for years against FARC leaders like Alfonso Cano that there should be no movement on hostages or other negotiable topics. Reyes argued he could get the best deal by going around the GOC and negotiating with the French and the Swiss, trying to play them off against each other. Restrepo said that the French and Swiss representatives had never met until he introduced them during his latest trip to Paris, following authorization from French Foreign Minister Douste-Balzy, with whom he had a "tough but very constructive" discussion. Restrepo again characterized the Spanish as a helpful but secondary player. In that meeting, he invited them to come to Colombia to view the El Retiro site where the government already had said that humanitarian accord talks might take place.

16. (C) Upon arrival at the site, facilitated by the ICRC, the French and Swiss representatives quickly concluded,

according to Restrepo, that a detailed proposal for security arrangements could be elaborated that would form the basis for a meeting between the GOC and FARC representatives on a "humanitarian" exchange of prisoners. Their proposal emerged shortly thereafter and was accepted by the GOC that same day (reftel); there is still no word from the FARC.

¶17. (C) Restrepo noted that, as the Spanish, French and Swiss representatives were departing from their survey of El Retiro, an urgent call from Raul Reyes was passed to the Swiss representative; Reyes wanted to meet with him alone, without the Frenchman. Only with difficulty did Restrepo and the French representative dissuade him from accepting. Restrepo characterized Reyes' call as an effort to "punish" the French for its cooperation with the GOC and the Swiss.

¶18. (C) Restrepo said that he has heard through several sources that Reyes was upset by the GOC's acceptance of the commission's proposal and that it had put Reyes in an uncomfortable position within the FARC leadership. Restrepo commented that Reyes's failed strategy has hurt him politically within the organization and is likely to stimulate further disagreement within the FARC leadership. It is unclear whether the FARC will accept the commission's proposal, but Restrepo views the GOC as having the upper hand this time around. The key is to avoid any further negotiation of the French-Swiss proposal; the FARC must take it or leave it.

PARAMILITARY DEMOBILIZATION CONCERNS

¶19. (C) Restrepo said that, despite efforts by United-Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) leaders to recreate a unified negotiating table after the two-month demobilization suspension, the AUC has been unable to restore unity; he is able to discuss demobilization dates, procedures, and details bloc-by-bloc. The Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB) decision to demobilize was critical to unfreezing the process. There is still no demobilization timetable for all groups, but he was optimistic that the majority of the remaining blocs would demobilize before February 15. The Mineros Bloc, with 1,000 members, plans to demobilize in early January. The symbolically important Self-Defense Mid-Magdalena Bloc of historical AUC leader Ramon Isaza, with 650 troops, is likely to demobilize before the end of January. Discussions with the Elmer Cardenas bloc are going well. But Restrepo is less confident about demobilization of the AUC "North Bloc" with 3,000 members under leader "Jorge 40," because regional pressures and a genuine FARC security threat could hamper the demobilization before February 15.

¶10. (C) Restrepo expressed frustration that President Uribe has failed to accept the recommendation from him and several others in the government for appointment of a senior official, with a track record for good public administration and his own political base, to manage reinsertion and implementation of the Justice and Peace law. Restrepo agreed with the Ambassador's comment that Minister of Justice and Interior Pretelt sees creation of such a position as a weakening of his own authority and expressed puzzlement because he believes Pretelt will leave the government anyway after elections. Restrepo said the lack of clear action on these critical processes as a serious problem, which is why he had publicly criticized GOC management in testimony to Congress the previous month. The Ambassador noted that he already had praised Restrepo's testimony to other GOC officials and expressed concern about the slow pace of implementation of the Justice and Peace law.

WOOD